

As part of our security agenda, we are promoting border security that halts illegal entry into the country. We are strengthening our national security by fighting terrorism in the Middle East where it begins, not on our own soil after an attack.

We are also promoting economic growth and job creation by lowering taxes and reducing regulation in order that families can plan for their very own secure future.

Energy security means America must harness our own domestic oil resources, expand oil refining capacity that is limited due to red tape, and at the same time carry out research and development for alternative energy sources while we focus on conservation's best practices.

We are fighting to defend the moral infrastructure that has made America great as part of our moral security agenda.

Mr. Speaker, we invite everyone to join us in a thoughtful process of securing America's future.

THE MINIMUM WAGE

(Mr. MCGOVERN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, the Federal minimum wage has been stuck at \$5.15 for 9 years. A minimum-wage worker working full time earns about \$10,712 a year. A minimum-wage worker has to work an entire day in order to be able to afford to fill their tank with gas.

Mr. Speaker, Members of Congress have awarded themselves eight pay raises since the last time we increased the Federal minimum wage. That is about \$35,000 in pay raises.

Mr. Speaker, 35 percent of workers who receive a minimum wage are their families' sole earners. Sixty-one percent are women and one-third of those women are raising children.

Here is the deal, I say to my Republican colleagues: have a heart. And if you are not going to allow us to have a clean vote up or down on the minimum wage, then bring to the floor a bill that repeals your pay raise. It is not right for Members of Congress to get a pay raise while they force millions of Americans to continue to live in poverty.

VAT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

(Mr. PITTS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, as we head into August, it is worth noting our record so far this year in defense of traditional values.

Last month this body affirmed the role of fathers by passing a resolution to promote responsible fatherhood in America. Also in June, we got serious about enforcing broadcast decency standards by increasing fines for vio-

lating the law tenfold. Just this week the President signed the Freedom to Display the American Flag Act.

Last week we defended the Pledge of Allegiance from the whims of activist judges who seek to ban it from our schools. Although the Marriage Protection Amendment failed to get two-thirds support, it gained votes in both the House and Senate this year. Earlier this month we passed legislation to enforce laws prohibiting illegal online gambling. And last week we affirmed the dignity of human life by rejecting taxpayer funding of human embryo-destraining research.

Mr. Speaker, it has been a good first half of the year for millions of Americans who wish to see traditional American values defended on Capitol Hill. And I look forward to future successes when we reconvene after August.

WAIVING POINTS OF ORDER AGAINST CONFERENCE REPORT ON S. 250, CARL D. PERKINS CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2006

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 946 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 946

Resolved, That upon the adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to consider the conference report to accompany the bill (S. 250) to amend the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 1998 to improve the Act. All points of order against the conference report and against its consideration are waived. The conference report shall be considered as read.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KUHLMANN of New York). The gentleman from Utah (Mr. BISHOP) is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

House Resolution 946 provides for the consideration of the conference report to accompany Senate 250, the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2006 and waives all points of order against its consideration.

□ 1030

Mr. Speaker, I am actually proud to stand in support of this rule the underlying legislation, which reauthorizes important vocational education loans and programs. In our ever-changing economy, it is clear that education and training is more vital than ever before to both our Nation's economic growth and competitiveness, as well as the quality of life for individuals and their families.

This conference agreement will, among other things, direct the States to assess the effectiveness of State programs for career and technical education, with an emphasis on math and science, and also establishes performance indicators for those programs.

It will enhance coordination between secondary and post-secondary vocational programs and strengthen the role of the States in administering these programs, and this is a funding of a legislative priority.

This legislation allows for increased flexibility for States who choose the option to combine the Perkins State Grant with the Tech-Prep programs into one program, leading to greater program efficiencies. This once again is a State option.

It allows for the States to provide "incentive grants" to encourage and recognize exemplary performances in carrying out career and technical education programs.

It also will ensure the continued access to teachers for professional development certification.

Mr. Speaker, in 1917, the government first funded training for vocational programs relating to national defense. In 1963, we passed the first Vocational Education Act. It was modified in 1984 as the Carl Perkins Program, and again in 1990. So this program has been here in some way for 90 years in this Nation helping those vocational programs and training our citizens for their future.

I urge my colleagues to support this rule and the underlying legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mr. MCGOVERN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Utah (Mr. BISHOP) for yielding me the customary 30 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, today this House is considering the conference report for the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act. This is a good bill, a worthy bill. This bill addresses the needs of America's changing workforce and hopefully it will help close the gaps that threaten our long-term ability to compete in the global economy.

I want to express my appreciation and my respect for the leadership and hard work invested over the past 15 months by House Education and Workforce Committee Chairman BUCK McKEON and ranking member GEORGE MILLER in moving these vital issues forward and that resulted in this strong, bipartisan supported bill.

Mr. Speaker, the conference report successfully improves several aspects of the programs authorized under the Perkins Act. It provides for more effective accountability for these programs. It establishes stronger links to businesses and stronger partnerships between high schools, colleges and businesses, including small businesses. It

creates better links and sequences of courses from high school to college and it promotes a much stronger academic focus, consistent with other Federal K-12 educational programs.

Mr. Speaker, I am a very strong supporter of vocational, career and technical education, and I am not alone in Central Massachusetts in believing in the importance of vocational and technical education.

Let me share with my colleagues an important milestone that took place just last month in Worcester, Massachusetts. On June 8, the last class to occupy the old Worcester Vocational High School graduated, ending an era that began in 1910 when the Boys Trade School opened its doors to 29 ironworkers and 23 woodworkers.

That evening, 204 graduating seniors who attended classes in that 1910 building received their high school diplomas in subjects as diverse as telecommunications, cosmetology and hotel management. These students represent a well-educated workforce.

In the past 5 years, in Worcester alone, the number of vocational technical graduates attending college has nearly tripled, from 24 percent in 2001 to 68 percent this year. It is not surprising, therefore, to know that the scores of these students on the Massachusetts mandatory State test, which has formidable high standards, have risen significantly, a testament to the hard work of students, faculty, school administrators and parents.

This coming September, a new era will begin for Worcester's vocational and technical students when they start classes in a new state-of-the-art school, the Worcester Technical High School. I have had the opportunity to tour this new school, the first vocational high school in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to be built in the last 30 years. I can assure my colleagues that the goals and programs outlined in today's reauthorization bill will find fertile ground and flourish at Worcester Technical High School.

But, Mr. Speaker, it takes more than just a good framework like the one provided by this conference report to ensure a quality education. It takes resources. It takes money. And, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, that worries me.

I worry whether this House has the same bipartisan dedication and commitment that so successfully negotiated this conference agreement to make sure that these same programs are adequately funded in the future. Every year President Bush recommends the elimination of the Perkins vocational education programs in his budget. Every year, Mr. Speaker, every year he does this.

Will the Republican leadership of this House pledge to organize a bipartisan effort and convince the President that he must include full funding for the Perkins Act in his budget?

Each year when the President has eliminated the Perkins vocational and technical programs, the Republican

majority of this House passes a budget resolution that matches the President's request, which means it also eliminates the funding for the Perkins Act programs.

Where does that leave us, Mr. Speaker? It leaves us with an appropriations allocation for education that is so low it is impossible to adequately fund our Federal education programs. In order to restore \$1.3 billion to the Perkins program, we are forced to steal money from other critical K-12 and higher education programs.

This year is no exception. In the FY 2007 Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Act, which has been waiting in the wings for 6 weeks since June 13 for a chance to come to the House floor, we once again see damaging cuts in education funding. For the second year in a row, funding for the Department of Education has been cut, this time \$404 million below FY 2006 levels and \$1 billion below FY 2005 levels. While the appropriations bill provides \$1.3 billion for vocational education programs, this is the same level as last year. This means vocational education grants will have lost \$83 million in real purchasing power since FY 2005.

Mr. Speaker, nearly half of all high school students and about one-third of all college students take vocational education courses to be ready for today's world of work. We cannot keep freezing the funding for these programs. The result is a de facto cut in resources at exactly the time when this authorization increases standards and accountability for vocational and technical schools.

So I hope that my colleagues on the other side of the aisle will finally commit themselves not just to authorizing these critical programs, but to working in a bipartisan, all-out effort to make sure that they are adequately funded. Otherwise, nothing we do here today matters.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I have to admit I am a little bit confused. Only July 12, this House voted 260-159 in favor of a motion to instruct the conferees appointed to negotiate on this conference report to state clearly that when this authorizing bill describes as its purpose to prepare students for high wage jobs, that those jobs should, in no case, pay less than \$7.25 an hour. 260-159, Mr. Speaker. That is an overwhelming vote. Sixty-four Republicans joined every single Democrat and Independent in this House in support of this language. But somehow, Mr. Speaker, it does not appear in the conference report.

High skilled jobs are important, Mr. Speaker. High wage jobs matter. And so does raising the minimum wage. The minimum wage was established 63 years ago to alleviate poverty. Today, the minimum wage condemns workers and their families to a life of poverty. That is more than 6.5 million hardworking American workers. I thought that was why 260 members of this House voted 2 weeks ago to demand

that the conferees include in this bill that the phrase "high wage" means no less than \$7.25 an hour.

Did the House conferees not take the Members of this House seriously? Did they fight during negotiations to include these words in the final conference report? Because, if so, then why isn't it there?

Mr. Speaker, I have worked in this House for a while now, 10 years as a Member of Congress and 13 years before that as a Congressional aid. I remember when motions to instruct conferees were taken seriously by Members appointed to the conference committee.

The Republican leadership will not allow this House to act on the FY 2007 Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Act because it contains an increase in the minimum wage. Every Health, Education and Labor Department program is being held hostage to the Republican majority's determination to keep 6.5 million hardworking Americans in poverty.

Now they will not allow a handful of words, supported so strongly by Members of this House, to be included in this conference report. What are they so afraid of?

As we take up the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act conference report, we can all be proud of our support of vocational, technical and career education. But with all due respect, Mr. Speaker, what we do today is meaningless. It is worthless if we fail to ensure adequate appropriations for these programs and if we continue to let the minimum wage stagnate and willingly and deliberately condemn more and more American workers to lives of poverty.

In closing, I will support this bill because it does authorize a number of good programs. But let me repeat so my colleagues on the other side of the aisle can hear this loud and clear: It is not enough to authorize programs. We need to fund them. And this President has consistently tried to eliminate funding for important vocational educational programs and this Congress passes budgets that also eliminate funding for these programs. And, quite frankly, the funding that we do provide is inadequate.

Finally, let me repeat to all Members of this House, that it is a disgrace that we are about to recess for our August vacation without increasing the Federal minimum wage. It has been stuck at \$5.15 an hour for nearly 9 years. During that same period of time, Members of this House have increased their pay eight different times, totaling about \$35,000.

If this Republican leadership does not want to allow Members of this House a clean, straight, up-or-down vote on the minimum wage, then they should at least have the decency to bring to the floor a resolution to repeal this pay raise. It is wrong to increase our pay and, at the same time, refuse to do anything about the millions of American workers who are stuck in poverty.

If you work in this country, you should get paid enough so you don't have to live in poverty.

Again, vocational education is important, but we need to fund these programs. That is something that this Republican Congress has failed to do.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, in closing, I wish to try and address my remarks to the bill we have before us and hopefully keep them germane to the particular issue we have in front of us.

We have a very good conference report. It is a conference report which is just what a conference report is, a negotiated compromise between both parties and both Houses of this Congress, which means, in essence, we have 535 different opinions and we have compromised down to one bill, which I think satisfies the base needs of all of us, or at least the vast majority of us who are in Congress right now.

This is legislation that reflects legislative priorities as to funding for vocational education.

□ 1045

It provides more funds than perhaps the programs that have been assigned to us by the Constitution would do to this particular body. But it does reflect those priorities.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this resolution because a "yes" vote moves us forward. A "no" vote on this resolution would harm kids. Mr. Speaker, I support the resolution and the underlying legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The previous question was ordered.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 4157, HEALTH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY PROMOTION ACT OF 2006

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 952 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 952

Resolved, That at any time after the adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 4157) to amend the Social Security Act to encourage the dissemination, security, confidentiality, and usefulness of health information technology. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed one hour, with 35 minutes equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee

on Energy and Commerce and 25 minutes equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Ways and Means. After general debate the bill shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule. In lieu of the amendments recommended by the Committees on Energy and Commerce and Ways and Means now printed in the bill, the amendment in the nature of a substitute printed in part A of the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution, modified by the amendment printed in part B of such report, shall be considered as adopted in the House and in the Committee of the Whole. The bill, as amended, shall be considered as the original bill for the purpose of further amendment under the five-minute rule and shall be considered as read. All points of order against provisions in the bill, as amended, are waived. Notwithstanding clause 11 of rule XVIII, no amendment to the bill, as amended, shall be in order except those printed in part C of the report of the Committee on Rules. Each such amendment may be offered only in the order printed in the report, may be offered only by a Member designated in the report, shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for the time specified in the report equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent, shall not be subject to amendment, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question in the House or in the Committee of the Whole. All points of order against such amendments are waived. At the conclusion of consideration of the bill for amendment the Committee shall rise and report the bill, as amended, to the House with such further amendments as may have been adopted. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and amendments thereto to final passage without intervening motion except one motion to recommend with or without instructions.

SEC. 2. After passage of H.R. 4157, it shall be in order to consider in the House S. 1418. All points of order against the Senate bill and against its consideration are waived. It shall be in order to move to strike all after the enacting clause of the Senate bill and to insert in lieu thereof the provisions of H.R. 4157 as passed by the House. All points of order against that motion are waived. If the motion is adopted and the Senate bill, as amended, is passed, then it shall be in order to move that the House insist on its amendments to S. 1418 and request a conference with the Senate thereon.

SEC. 3. House Resolution 924 is laid upon the table.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Florida (Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART) is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. MATSUI), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

(Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, the rule provides 1 hour of general debate with 35 minutes equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Energy and Commerce and 25 minutes equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member on the

Committee on Ways and Means. The rule also provides one motion to recommend with or without instructions.

Mr. Speaker, the information age has greatly changed our economy by bringing about increased efficiencies in productivity. Virtually every sector of our economy benefits from the use of new information technologies.

Right here in Congress, for example, the use of technology has opened up access to the workings of our democracy like never before. Technology allows our constituents to quickly view the status of a bill or to look up our voting records.

Mr. Speaker, the health care industry has not fully embraced the advantages and benefits of information technology. According to a study by the RAND Corporation, only 15 percent of physicians and 20 percent of hospitals use computerized patient files.

Broad use of information technology in the health care system would certainly improve the quality and efficiency of health care delivery.

The use of health information technology is increasingly necessary to deliver the best care possible to individuals with chronic illnesses. The use of health care IT would also promote interoperability between providers and payers.

Efficiencies from coordinated development of health IT will accelerate and advance private and public efforts to improve quality, lower costs, reduce fraud and abuse, and promote the coordination of care. The synergy of these efficiencies will help achieve better health outcomes for patients.

The Health Information Technology Promotion Act, which we bring to the floor today, will improve the quality of care Americans receive through national adoption of electronic medical records and e-prescribing systems.

The legislation promotes the adoption and use of interoperable health information technology that prevents medical and prescription errors and costly duplicate tests, eliminates lost medical records, simplifies our administrative system, and improves medical care and the treatment of chronic illnesses.

The legislation we bring to the floor today provides grants for the use of health information technology to coordinate care among the uninsured and to implement technology in small physician practices. It also updates diagnostic coding, systems for the digital age, and provides for an expedited process to update standards.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation was introduced by Congresswoman NANCY JOHNSON, my dear friend, who is a true expert in the field of health care. It was reported out of the House Energy and Commerce Committee. We believe it is time that the health care industry moves to a digital future, and this legislation is an important step in seeing that to reality.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Congresswoman JOHNSON and Chairman BARTON and Chairman THOMAS for